

**National Infant Immunization Week April 22-29, 2006**

**Love them. Protect them. Immunize them.**

**Working together with Vaccination Week in the Americas**

**Vaccination: an act of love**



## **National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) Background**

National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) is an annual observance through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to promote the benefits of immunizations and to improve the health of children two years old or younger. Since 1994, NIIW has provided an excellent opportunity for local and state health departments, national immunization partners, healthcare providers, and community leaders from across the country to highlight the positive impact of immunization on the lives of infants and children and to call attention to immunization achievements.

This year's NIIW, to be held April 22-29, 2006, will again take advantage of the successful partnership developed in 2004 with the Pan American Health Organization's (PAHO) Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA). In 2004, CDC partnered with VWA to broaden national efforts to increase awareness about infant immunizations and access to health services. More than 35 countries in the Western Hemisphere worked together on this unprecedented event to highlight the need for routine vaccinations and to promote access to health services for infants and children. Bi-national awareness and education events took place in conjunction with PAHO and the United States - Mexico Border Health Commission in sister city sites along the United States and Mexico border.

Recently, several important milestones have been reached in controlling vaccine-preventable diseases among infants and adults worldwide:

- April 2005 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the polio vaccine as "Safe, effective, and potent." On April 12, 1955, Dr. Thomas Francis Jr., director of the Poliomyelitis Vaccine Evaluation Center at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, announced to the world that the Salk polio vaccine was up to 90% effective in preventing paralytic polio.
- In March 2005, CDC announced that rubella is no longer a major health threat to expectant mothers and their unborn children, thanks to a safe and effective vaccine, high vaccine coverage, and parents' confidence in the vaccination recommendation.

Vaccines have drastically reduced infant death and disability caused by preventable diseases in the United States. Yet without diligent efforts to maintain immunization programs here and strengthen them worldwide, vaccine-preventable diseases will remain a threat to children.

NIIW-VWA 2006 will kick-off this year's awareness and education effort with special events in Arizona and Utah. More than 500 communities from across the United States will participate in NIIW and VWA by planning community awareness and media events to promote infant immunizations to parents, caregivers, healthcare providers, and their communities.

### **NIIW provides an opportunity to:**

- Highlight the importance and benefits of childhood immunizations, especially to parents.

- Educate parents and caregivers about the importance of vaccination in protecting their children from birth against thirteen vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Focus attention on our immunization achievements and celebrate the accomplishments made possible through successful collaboration.
- Revitalize efforts to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases and give them a healthy start in life.
- Encourage better communication between parents and caregivers and healthcare providers.
- Remind parents and caregivers they need to make and keep needed immunization appointments.
- Provide parents and caregivers with a toll-free number, 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), to locate a facility that offers free immunizations (Vaccines for Children's program) for their child.

**NIIW also supports efforts to:**

- Work with state and local health departments and local coalitions to develop and implement a local communication strategy to increase awareness of the importance of immunization and improve local immunization coverage rates as measured by the National Immunization Survey.
- Create events that attract community and media to increase the number and visibility of national and local media stories on infant immunization.
- Provide a forum to pitch news stories, provide a media hook to interest local media in developing feature stories on the importance of childhood immunization, and create opportunities for local media interviews with immunization experts.
- Recognize local partners and volunteers for their year-round efforts helping to raise childhood immunization coverage, with special emphasis on completing the vaccination series.
- Create opportunities for local organizations and agencies to work together as coalitions.

**Vaccination Week in the Americas offers opportunities to:**

- Vaccinate children under 5 years of age and women of childbearing age never before vaccinated, or who are not up-to-date on their vaccinations.
- Develop plans for solidifying vaccination efforts after the Vaccination Week in the Americas.
- Preserve the eradication of measles in the region.
- Continue the eradication of rubella (or German measles) and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).
- Strengthen epidemiological monitoring of vaccine preventable diseases.
- Promote equity and improve access to vaccination.
- Protect groups at risk of epidemics.
- Promote communication and cooperation among nations.
- Promote Pan Americanism.

Please visit [www.cdc.gov/nip](http://www.cdc.gov/nip) for additional information on NIIW.